

## Mr. James Coker Fort

February 15, 1927 - September 9, 2022

James Coker Fort, 95, died on Friday, September 9, 2022, at his home, Merlin Glen, in Blowing Rock, North Carolina, a place he treasured.

Born in Gaffney, South Carolina, in 1927, he was the second son of James Claude Fort and Gladys Coker Fort. In 1951, he married Jean Prentice Smith in Bermuda after a courtship that began in Kindergarten in Gaffney. Their marriage lasted 65 years until Jean's death in 2015 and produced 7 children, 19 grandchildren, and 5 great-grandchildren.

Jim attended the Darlington School in Rome, Georgia, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, from which he graduated in 1949, after a stint in North Africa with the U.S. Navy during World War II. After graduation, Jim began a long career at Sonoco Products Company in Hartsville, South Carolina. He held a number of executive positions and was a member of the Board of Directors.

During his time with Sonoco and following his retirement, Jim served on the boards of Coker University (formerly Coker College) in Hartsville, the Bank of Hartsville, the Hartsville Oil Mill, and Steele Heddle Manufacturing in Greenville, South Carolina. He was a founding member of the Blowing Rock Art and History Museum, a Life Trustee of the Darlington School, board member of the North Carolina Botanical Gardens in Chapel Hill, and

Chairman of The Trust Company of South Carolina. Later in life, he was a co-founder and chairman of American Media Services Company, a developer of radio properties. Jim and Jean were congregants of St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church in Hartsville and St. Mary of the Hills Episcopal Church in Blowing Rock.

Jim was an exhaustive reader, a lover of classical music, a world traveler, and in his earlier years proved to be an accomplished amateur sculptor. He had a special passion for vintage cars and treasured his 1934 V12 Packard, a surprise Christmas gift from Jean. On mountain walks he enjoyed identifying the wildflowers, and knew the birds that visited his feeders in Blowing Rock. He loved red wine and a good story. Ever prepared with the introduction, "I heard a joke the other day," he made his loved ones laugh until his last.

Jim is survived by his six children: Gay Fort Boswell, of Charlotte, NC, Melanie Fort Christian (Lynch), of Lynchburg, VA, Claudia Fort Heath (Andy), of Charlotte, NC, Caleb Coker Fort, of Winston Salem, NC, George Hamlet Tatum Fort (Alice), of Little Switzerland, NC, and Edward Gay Fort (Lori) of Hartsville, SC, 19 grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his son, James Coker Fort, Jr., his grandson, Saxon Crenshaw Boswell, and his wife Jean Prentice Smith Fort.

A private family service will be held at St. Mary of the Hills Episcopal Church on Saturday, September 17.

Memorial contributions may be made to Coker University Scholarship Fund, Hartsville, SC, or St. Mary of the Hills Episcopal Church, Blowing Rock, NC.

# Tribute Wall

LL

“ *Lori And Randy Lowe lit a candle in memory of Mr. James Coker Fort*



Lori and Randy Lowe - October 29, 2022 at 02:34 PM

PN

“ *Patricia Newsome lit a candle in memory of Mr. James Coker Fort*



Patricia newsome - October 13, 2022 at 10:44 AM

GR

“ *Greg Reaves lit a candle in memory of Mr. James Coker Fort*



Greg Reaves - September 26, 2022 at 05:53 PM

CJ

“ *Charles Johnson lit a candle in memory of Mr. James Coker Fort*



Charles Johnson - September 25, 2022 at 06:18 PM

CH

“ Claire Howle lit a candle in memory of Mr. James Coker Fort



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**Claire Howle** - September 22, 2022 at 04:05 AM

DW

“ Donna Wiggins lit a candle in memory of Mr. James Coker Fort



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**Donna Wiggins** - September 22, 2022 at 02:03 AM

II

“ Irene Ingram lit a candle in memory of Mr. James Coker Fort



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**Irene Ingram** - September 19, 2022 at 07:44 PM

TW

“ Sending heartfelt condolences to all..Terri Woodham

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**Terri Northcutt Woodham** - September 15, 2022 at 04:26 PM



“ I had not seen Mr. Fort for quiet awhile but I remember him with great fondness from the time I worked for him at Sonoco back in the "olden days". I credit him with helping me break barriers to move up through the secretarial ranks into management , which was unusual at the time. I was at Sonoco for 43 years and had a lot of bosses, but he was one of my favorites and was the one who helped me most in my career advancement. I was in awe of him because he was so well organized and could accomplish so much in a limited amount of time. I will always remember him with respect and admiration.

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**Modene Terry Echerd** - September 15, 2022 at 08:49 AM

PS

“ Pam Sansbury lit a candle in memory of Mr. James Coker Fort



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**Pam Sansbury** - September 15, 2022 at 07:58 AM

HB

“ Hilda Biggerstaff lit a candle in memory of Mr. James Coker Fort



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**Hilda Biggerstaff** - September 14, 2022 at 05:28 PM

KC

“ Edward and family, I'm sorry to hear of your Dad's passing. Thoughts and prayers are with you and your family today and in the days to come

Kim Bryant Clanton - September 14, 2022 at 12:54 PM

NB

“ Norwood B. purchased a sympathy card for the family of Mr. James Coker Fort.



Norwood B. - September 14, 2022 at 11:58 AM

CC

“ Carole C. Cannarella lit a candle in memory of Mr. James Coker Fort



Carole C. Cannarella - September 14, 2022 at 10:42 AM

AS

“ Al & Melinda Sansbury lit a candle in memory of Mr. James Coker Fort




Al & Melinda Sansbury - September 14, 2022 at 10:28 AM

LG

“ Lyndal Gibson lit a candle in memory of Mr. James Coker Fort



Lyndal Gibson - September 14, 2022 at 09:30 AM

  
Roberta  
Timmons

“ To the entire Fort family, I am so sorry for your loss. Gay Fort Boswell was my sweet little friend at Saint Mary's school in Hartsville, SC. I visited your dad at the museum several times on my many trips to Blowing Rock, NC. I so enjoyed talking to him sometimes for several hours. He was so proud of all of his children. What a wonderful dad you had. Such a joy to have known him. Prayers for you Gay and the entire family. Much love, Roberta Driskell Timmons.



Roberta Timmons - September 13, 2022 at 09:07 PM

KL

“ Kathy Lawhon lit a candle in memory of Mr. James Coker Fort



Kathy Lawhon - September 13, 2022 at 09:07 PM

JS

“ *Jerry Sumner lit a candle in memory of Mr. James Coker Fort*



**Jerry Sumner** - September 13, 2022 at 06:48 PM

RI

“ *Ruth Iseman lit a candle in memory of Mr. James Coker Fort*



**Ruth Iseman** - September 13, 2022 at 04:58 PM

SH

“ *Sharon Shirley Howle lit a candle in memory of Mr. James Coker Fort*



**Sharon Shirley Howle** - September 13, 2022 at 03:53 PM

CG

“ *Connee Grantham lit a candle in memory of Mr. James Coker Fort*



**Connee Grantham** - September 13, 2022 at 02:44 PM

GT

“ *Deepest condolences to the family*



**george timmons** - September 13, 2022 at 02:34 PM

EP

“ *Eddie Parnell lit a candle in memory of Mr. James Coker Fort*



**Eddie Parnell** - September 13, 2022 at 02:29 PM

PC

“ *Pressly Coker lit a candle in memory of Mr. James Coker Fort*



**Pressly Coker** - September 13, 2022 at 01:39 PM

FJ

“ *Frances And Stephen Jones lit a candle in memory of Mr. James Coker Fort*



**Frances and Stephen Jones** - September 13, 2022 at 09:12 AM

LP

“ *Linda & Bill Price lit a candle in memory of Mr. James Coker Fort*



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**Linda & Bill Price** - September 13, 2022 at 08:32 AM

RB

“ *I am so sorry to hear this sad news. Sympathy and prayers to the Fort family on their loss.*

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**Renee Bock** - September 13, 2022 at 08:18 AM

BG

“ *Fort family, Don and I are thinking of you during your time of grief. May you find peace and comfort in memories of a life well lived. Deepest condolences, Bess and Don*

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**Bess Gore** - September 13, 2022 at 08:15 AM

RA

“ *My deepest condolences. Your father lived a wonderful life.*

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**Rebecca Jacobs Alford** - September 13, 2022 at 08:07 AM

RW

“ *Ron Wall lit a candle in memory of Mr. James Coker Fort*



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**Ron Wall** - September 13, 2022 at 07:27 AM

JR

“ *Jenny Rogers lit a candle in memory of Mr. James Coker Fort*



**jenny rogers** - September 13, 2022 at 07:27 AM

MB

“ *Matt And Betsy Bramlett lit a candle in memory of Mr. James Coker Fort*



**Matt and Betsy Bramlett** - September 13, 2022 at 07:05 AM

LE

“ *Larry Easterling lit a candle in memory of Mr. James Coker Fort*



**Larry Easterling** - September 13, 2022 at 06:47 AM

AW

“ *Jim and Jean Fort were my neighbors. Lovely and gracious. Always welcoming us into their beautiful home. So many wonderful memories. Bless all of their family. Love, Anna Williams*



**Anna Williams** - September 13, 2022 at 06:45 AM

CB

“ Tom and I are so very sorry for your loss. He was a wonderful man and will be greatly missed. All of you have our greatest sympathy

Cecelia D Brown - September 12, 2022 at 10:48 PM

RF

“ What a handsome father and grandfather.  
So sorry Claudia and family.  
Remember him decorating your home in Hartsville for Christmas with fresh cut greenery. His obituary reminded me of the sculpted busts in your home. I didn't know he was the artist. Brings back fond memories of all the fun I had with Claudia.  
I know all his family will miss him.  
Sincerely,

Rhonda Fink

Rhonda fink - September 12, 2022 at 09:41 PM

DG

“ Deborah Gandy lit a candle in memory of Mr. James Coker Fort



Deborah Gandy - September 12, 2022 at 09:21 PM

SC

“ *Sherry Cross lit a candle in memory of Mr. James Coker Fort*



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**Sherry Cross** - September 12, 2022 at 08:51 PM

JC

“ *John Crawford lit a candle in memory of Mr. James Coker Fort*



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**John Crawford** - September 12, 2022 at 07:15 PM